

Ames Historical Society

AMES • IOWA

Newsletter to Members 2010 SUMMER...ISSUE #3/4

The mission of the Ames Historical Society is to preserve local history and illuminate its stories.



Ames historian, Farwell T. Brown
with his mother, Mary Brown.

Ames Historical Society Board:

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The Board meets the 2nd Thursday of each month at City Hall at 6:45pm. Members welcome!

Administrator Alan Spohnheimer
Staff Sara Vouthilak, Dennis Wendell, Margaret Vance
Facility Manager Neal Tarman

Ames Historical Society is an incorporated, 501c3 not-for-profit organization dedicated to promoting interest in state and local history through publications, programs, exhibitions and operation of an archive and historic site.

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The newsletter is published four times a year for AHS members. Direct comments and questions to: Editor, PO Box 821, Ames, IA 50010 or e-mail above.

Hoggatt School is located on the grounds of Meeker School, near 18th and Burnett, Ames, IA. Open April 1 through October 31.

Remembering the Society's Founder: Farwell Tilden Brown

by Kathy Svec, Society Board member, with assistance from Janet Klaas, Dennis, Wendell and Alan Spohnheimer



On September 1, the Society's venerable founder and official Ames historian, Farwell Tilden Brown, slipped away from this mortal life to join the ranks of the legendary in local history. He was 99 years old.

In an interview in 2000, Farwell was asked how he came to be the Ames historian. In his quietly humorous way, he claimed it was by "just standing there!"

No one believes it was that simple, of course, but Farwell Brown was in the unique position of being the grandson of two pioneer families, the Browns and the Tildens.

K.W. Brown was a Civil War veteran who was the mid-west sales representative (a commercial traveler) for a New York City clothing manufacturer. The Tilden family operated a variety of early businesses: a grocery, department store and specialty clothing manufacturing operation. He grew up hearing family stories about the "early days."

He also inherited what he described as a "garage-full of stuff," most of it from his step-grandmother, Margaret Mitchell Brown. She was the daughter of Rev. Mitchell, minister of First Baptist Church of Ames and had been the Tilden Store bookkeeper before her marriage to K. W. Brown. As a bookkeeper, she was meticulous and this also applied to saved clippings, pictures and objects, all carefully identified and preserved.

These artifacts formed the basis of Farwell's first ventures into telling Ames stories, an interest that he began sharing after he retired from the Department of Transportation in 1976. His passion for local history picked up momentum when he was asked to give programs and talks around Ames in conjunction with Ames's celebration of the United States Bicentennial in 1976. (rt: with Campfire girls)



Farwell is best known for his extensive collection of historical Ames images, largely dating from the town's founding into the mid-1900s.

What stimulated his collecting all those Ames pictures? "The initial pictures came from my grandmother's album," Farwell explained. Then he began finding real-photo postcards showing early Ames scenes. Those first ones he found spurred an interest in finding more.

After the bicentennial talks, audience members would come up and say, "I have a picture ..." This happened time and again. People loaned him the photos and he would take them to his Northcrest Community home and copy them. For a long time, he maintained a darkroom where he developed and printed his own photographs and made negatives of photographs from other sources.

Those sources included the University Archives at Iowa State University's Parks Library. Staff would pull a file and allow him to make copies of items relevant to his stories. He also contacted antique dealers who would seek out Ames images for him. In his business and leisure travels, he continued to look for Ames images.

On one such excursion he stopped for lunch in Ackley, near Waterloo. Next door was a second-hand shop. He told the proprietor he was interested in Ames. The man had "just got" a box of postcards that had belonged to a 1908 graduate of Iowa State College. There were almost twenty images of the campus prior to 1908, ones he had never seen.

Once, a woman whose father had died in Galveston, Texas, wrote to the Ames city clerk. She had a box of pictures . . . did anyone want them? The city clerk called Farwell, Farwell called the woman saying yes, he wanted the pictures and she sent him the box.

Another note to city offices came from San Diego, CA. A woman had found an old album in a trash bin. It was full of pictures of Ames, Iowa. Someone had died and things had been put out to be hauled away. The album was sent to Farwell, who found it had belonged to woman who had graduated from Ames High School in 1926. In the album were many pictures and treasures such as a letter written to her father from ISC president, Raymond Pearson.

On another occasion, Farwell was in his dentist's office and in the course of a conversation with another patient was offered the loan of the man's album to copy. This sort of thing kept going on and on and on! Anyone in town who had photographs or who found photographs, called him. . . and he always said yes!

"Things fan out," Farwell explained, "and I've had a lot of fun - conversation-wise. I've made my living [as an insurance salesman, fundraiser, and real estate appraiser] talking with people. It's all the same kind of thing! Everything I've done has had the same common, base element. It all relates to my interest in history and my delight in talking to people."

During his first years of recording Ames history, he exceeded the capacity of several early-day computers. In the course of the interview, he admitted to slowing down, but still keeping at it. "I get things done," he chuckled, "but only compared to doing nothing!"

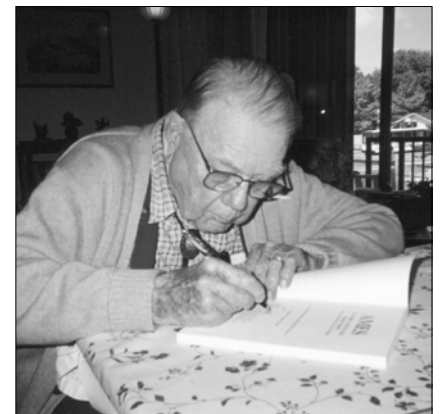
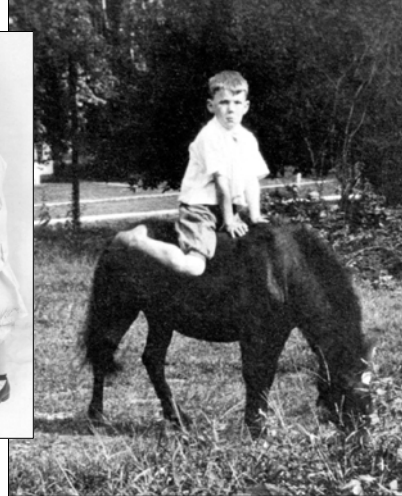
Farwell's collection of historic photos, donated to the Ames Public Library in 1989, is available on the Library's website (www.amespubliclibrary.org) to anyone with a curiosity about Ames's past. Through this collection of images and his many books, articles, and audio and video recordings, Farwell will live on!

Farwell Tilden Brown: Timeline

- 1864** Ames established, first plat laid out
- 1865** First train arrived in Ames; first house built; population about 100
- 1866** Paternal grandparents, the K.W. Brown family, arrived in Ames
- 1869** Maternal grandparents, the George Tilden family, arrived the year the college opened; Ames population 500-600
- 1910** Born at home to Harry & Mary Brown, 1004 Kellogg (no hospital in Ames yet). "Farwell" was his great-grandmother's maiden name & his father's middle name.
- 1929** Graduated from Ames High School
- 1929-30** Freshman year attended Oberlin College, OH
- 1934** Graduated from Iowa State College in Agricultural Economics
- 1934-62** Worked insurance business with his father
- 1962-76** Worked as a property appraiser for the Iowa Highway Commission (now the Department of Transportation)
- 1975** Started giving Ames history presentations for service club programs
- 1976** Retired Jan. 1 in America's bicentennial year; gave over 40 Ames history talks for the Ames Bicentennial Commission's year-long program
- 1981** Founded Ames Heritage Association (now Ames Historical Society) to support preservation of Ames history and restoration of Hoggatt School
- 1986** Named official Ames historian by City Council
- 1989** Donated photo archive to Ames Public Library
- 1990** Received Ames Public Library Trustees Award for "significant contributions to the library and the community"
- 1993** Published first book in a series of Ames stories: *Ames, The Early Years in Word and Pictures: From Marsh to Modern City*
- 1998** Ames Public Library auditorium dedicated and named Farwell T. Brown Auditorium
- 1999** Published second book in series: *Ames in Word and Picture: Further Tales and Personal Memories*; publication of the digital Farwell T. Brown Photographic Archive on Ames library website
- 2001** Published *Ames, Iowa, A Ride Through Town on the "Dinkey"* pictorial book
- 2003** Published third book in the series: *Ames in Word and Picture: Tales from Two Old Timers*, edited by Janet Klaas
- 2004** Published *A Soldier's Life, 1861-1865: the Civil War Diaries and Reminiscences of Kendrick Wade Brown*
- 2010** Died, September 1, at age 99



A Farwell Album



Top row, left to right: 1) Farwell with his mother, Mary Brown, 1911; 2) as a toddler; 3) in 1920 with Betty, the Shetland pony; 4) boyhood portrait

Middle row, left to right: 1) Family portrait with wife Ruth, sons Roger and Ken, daughters Mary and Cathy; 2) 1980 Ames Heritage Association founding picture with Rod Fox and Terry Adams; 3) 1986 on Farwell's 75th birthday

Bottom row, left to right: 1) Farwell with mortar and field stones for Hoggatt School foundation, 1981; 2) Farwell in 1994; 3) signing one of his books,

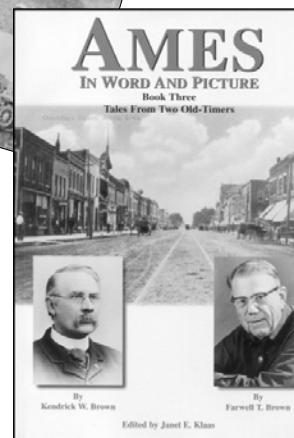
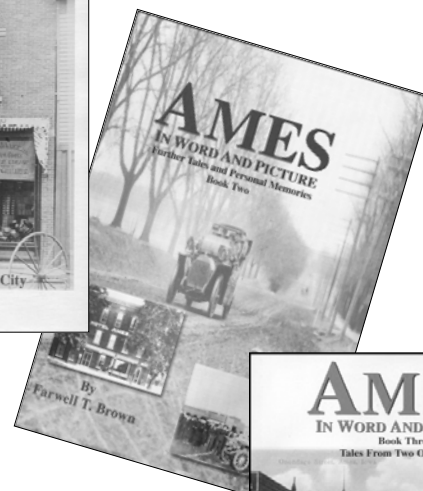
Date Set for “Ames Reads (and Remembers) Farwell”

The Ames Historical Society and Ames Public Library will sponsor “Ames Reads (and Remembers) Farwell” on **Saturday, December 18 from 1- 4pm** in Farwell T. Brown Auditorium at the library.

Farwell Brown was the official Ames historian and founder of the Ames Historical Society as well as the namesake for the auditorium in the Ames Public Library. He passed away on September 1. December 18 would have been the day following Brown’s 100th birthday.

The afternoon-long event will be a community-participation “happening” with local residents reading aloud from Farwell Brown’s written legacy. The first portion of the program at 1pm will be devoted to an “open mic” for anyone who would like to reminisce about Farwell and share stories about their interactions with him.

Providing a backdrop for the readings will be a slide show of pictures of Farwell throughout his life. His books will be for sale that day and light refreshments will be served at the program’s mid-point. Audience members may come and go throughout the afternoon. The program is free and open to the public.



Society News



Active Membership Committee

The Society’s Membership Committee meets monthly to create awareness about the benefits of supporting the Society through annual memberships. These dollars are an important source of operating funds.

A number of individuals and families have been invited to join the ranks of members, and the committee is moving toward its goal of increasing total memberships to 500 this year. Pictured clockwise from the lower left are: Ellen Landon, Sylvia Vust, Fred Walker, Peggy Baer, Sara Spohnhemier, Marie Wilson and Meg Speer.

We Hope to Clarify!

We sometimes find that our members are confused by our bi-annual requests for financial support. We sincerely regret this and hope to clarify our intentions!

The Society asks for financial support twice a year.

The first request is for membership renewal. This request is approximately one year from the last time a member renews and is accompanied by a self-addressed envelope that shows the various membership categories. Membership dollars are channeled to our annual operating budget that keeps the doors open, the lights on and the staff paid.

The second request is the “End of the Year” appeal that comes in November or December. It also is accompanied by a self-addressed envelope but is marked “End of Year Appeal”. This is an opportunity for those who wish to provide additional support for a particular project or area of need - building fund, endowment or operating funds. If no designation is made for the end of the year donations, they are used to pay operating expenses. The newsletter is sent to members & donors.

Introducing New Research Assistant: Margaret Vance

The newest employee at Society headquarters is long-time Ames resident, Margaret Vance. She was selected from a field of 29 applicants for her expertise and interest in things historical and her long association with the community. We are grateful for a donation by former research assistant, Alice Mellen and a grant from Wells-Fargo Bank that funds her position. At this time, she works two afternoons a week during open hours.

Margaret says, "Even though I have not lived in Ames all my life, I have always considered it my home town.



I have lived here four different times for a total of 46 years, the last stretch being 34 years on an acreage north of town before my move to Northcrest a year ago. Her roots go deep in Ames. Her grandparents, Bill and Fanny Durrell settled in Ames in 1916.

Margaret's parents, Loya and Austin Getz, were well known in the town's first church, UCC-Congregational. Loya was a high school classmate of the Society's founder, Farwell Brown. Austin was Ames' first City Sanitarian. Her husband's parents, Thomas and Blythe Vance, came to Ames in 1914. He was a professor of Psychology and Child Development at Iowa State for 45 years and helped start both those departments.

Margaret is a 1950 Ames High graduate and attended Iowa State College for three years before marrying Frank Vance who was born and raised in Ames. His time in the Air Force and career in Special Education took them away for a number of years. They returned in 1976 and have been here ever since. Frank passed away in July.

Margaret was a stay-at-home mom until their two children were grown. Then she worked part time as a floral designer at The Sugar Tree on Main Street, then at Mary Kay's Flowers and Gifts. She also did display work that she hopes will be helpful when the Society expands its museum space. She recalls volunteering in the first space the Society rented at 417 Douglas.

She says, "I am finding this job quite fascinating. I learn something new with each person who comes to us with their questions or requests and it is so rewarding to send them away happy with the information we can provide."

Changes at Hoggatt School

If you have visited Hoggatt School recently, you've noticed some changes. This past year, the Hoggatt School committee - Sharon Wirth, Neal Tarman, Carol Phillips, Mary Atherly and Fred Walker - have been working to implement suggestions from a historical consultant. The goal has been two-fold: to complete needed repairs and to make architectural changes for a more historically appropriate appearance to the school.

Preservation contractor, Tom Richards of Nevada was hired to complete the work. Foundation vents and a vapor barrier have been installed to control humidity in the foundation and humidity monitoring continues.

Support timbers in the area of the front door needed repair and reinforcement to stabilize this area. Just inside the door, floor repairs were also completed resulting in a more even and safer environment for visitors. An historically-appropriate front door was installed along with a new shutter door (to protect the inner door). After considerable research, a set of simple wooden steps with a custom iron hand rail was chosen to complete the new front-door appearance.

Several thousand dollars have been spent on these renovations to stabilize the school building to ensure that future generations can continue to learn about this



important phase of Ames history. Inside the school are three new framed posters recounting the history of Hoggatt School, the forming of the

Ames Historical Society and other points of interest about our Civil War-era school. Design of the posters was donated by Phillips Photography of Ames. A new brochure is being created that will be available in literature bins throughout Ames early next year.

Curator Carol Phillips continues to work on the authenticity of artifacts and activities used at Hoggatt, including interactive ways to share the story of a country school in the 1860's. The fall season ends November 1. Tours can be scheduled by contacting Carol Alexander Phillips, caphill@mchsi.com.

Volunteers are needed at Hoggatt to assist with:

- Giving tours and hosting visitors
- Moving artifacts at the season beginning and ending
- Helping with games on special Game Days

Society News

Calling All Volunteers!

Recently, the Society's Volunteer Coordinator, Fred Walker hosted Linda Vogtlin and Tom Flack to discuss volunteer projects. Administrator Alan Spohnheimer gave a tour of facilities and highlighted what some of our current volunteers are doing:

Anita Beal & Janet Klaas: indexing Farwell Brown's books to more easily find topics

Paul Clark: identifying 1950's negatives from the Ames Tribune photo archive

Jerry Litzel: searching for obituaries

Jim Metzel & Hank Zalel: providing Ames postcards for our collection

Margaret Benson: transcribing oral interviews

Teresa Larson: recording oral histories

Bill Lutz: digitizing pictures of Main Street and Campustown for our collection

Mary Atherly & Eleanor Ostendorf: cataloging archives and artifacts as they are donated

Jim Lester & Jim Fitz: building maintenance work

Paul Lindemeyer & Larrison Seidle: designing and revising a brochure on Main Street

There are volunteer projects for many interests and skill levels. Schedules are flexible: donate time weekly, monthly or on an on-call basis to research questions on various topics.

Here is a sampling of activities that volunteers could provide assistance with:

- Manage and sell items designated by donors for fundraising (using eBay or other outlets)
- Assist with oral history recording and editing
- Assist project manager with WWII scrapbook digitizing project (scan/prepare web pages)
- Seek Ames images from 1960s to fill gap in Ames Tribune photo archive
- Digital repair of old photos using PhotoShop or other programs
- Enter information into databases (done at home)
- Research topics for the "From the Archives" weekly newspaper picture
- Plumbing, electrical repairs, gutter cleaning, snow removal, HVAC maintenance, window cleaning, etc.
- Hosting summer open hours at Hoggatt School

Interested? Call or e-mail Volunteer Coordinator, Fred Walker at 515-233-2838 or fredarl@yahoo.com.

For those interested in volunteering, there will be regular meetings at Society headquarters to review interests and skills and match them with our needs.

Dodds Descendant to Receive Iowa State University Award



Our last two newsletters included the story of the Dodds family and their farm north of Ames that became the ISU Horticulture Research Station. Now, a current family member is making the news. Mary Dodds Schlick, Mt. Hood, OR, will receive an award during Iowa State's Homecoming festivities. She graduated from ISU in 1947 in Household Equipment.

Schlick is a curator at the Maryhill Museum of Art, Goldendale, WA. She has contributed to preserving the cultural heritage of Pacific Northwest Native Americans and is one of the nation's foremost authorities on native arts of the interior Northwest.

Schlick learned basket making techniques from Columbia Plateau native elders and began training younger women. According to the Tamástslikt Cultural Institute, a museum and research institute on eastern Oregon's Umatilla Indian Reservation, Schlick's real achievement has been her contribution to the preservation of "ancient technologies." "[Mary] was entrusted as a bearer of culture. She helped assure that technology would survive among new generations of Indian people through her writing and teaching. She is very much the trusted and responsible source of knowledge."

Russ Vifquain Jr. to be Remembered



During the Veterans' Day ceremony at the Iowa State University Memorial Union, former Ames resident, Russell M. Vifquain, Jr. will be remembered, one of four servicemen whose stories will be told that day.

Vifquain served in the Air Corps during WWII as a navigator and saw action in Alaska and in the South Pacific. He died in May 1945 when his plane went down near Iwo Jima after a bombing raid to Nagoya, Japan. He was the son of Russ Sr. and Zola Vifquain.

The ceremony takes place on Thursday, Nov. 11 at 3:15pm in the Memorial Union's Great Hall. The program is free and the public is welcome.

Visitors, Mail and E-Mail

Ames Stop on World Tour



On July 27 & 28, the Society enjoyed hosting Steven Weinberg as he stopped in Ames on his way around the world in his 1959 Renault 4CV. Steven started in New York City and is following the route of the 1908 New York to Paris race. Society members may enjoy seeing his photos (including one of Dennis Wendell, our curator) and reading about his time spent in Ames on his website <http://weinberg.lu>. His blog recounting day-to-day events on his journey is at <http://www.weinberg.lu/blog2.php>. Because Steven is from Luxembourg, his website is available both in French and English.

Mural in Smithsonian Magazine

In mid-July, a request was received for a high resolution image of the Ames Post Office mural that features a current-day farmer and an ancient Aztec Indian. Allan Britnell, Toronto, needed it for a story that is scheduled to appear in the Fall 2010 issue of the Smithsonian's American Indian magazine.

Froning Correction

This note came from Carol Deppe, Ames: "Bob and I were pleased to see the article about the donation of the Froning-Deppe elevator ladder. [However], Froning was misspelled, so I hope that can be corrected in your next issue.

This summer, it has been a joy to meet so many people interested in Ames history when Bob, Alan, et al gave programs about the grain elevator's history. Looking forward to the next one."

The Editor regrets the error - not "Frohning"!

Questers Cozy Up!

The Neta Snook Questers held their September meeting at Society HQ. Sixteen members toured the facilities and heard a presentation from Alan Spohnheimer about past and current efforts to preserve Ames history.

Questers chapters study antiques and work to preserve and restore historic sites. It was exciting to have 16 guests at the same time and the Questers were very gracious about holding their meeting in our cramped facility!



Memories of WWII Scrapbooks

This note about an article in our Winter 2009 issue arrived from Anita Ohlson Wald Tuttle, CA, "The article on the Story County WWII Collection grabbed me again. I was part of that history!"

In the early 40s, [Library Director] Letha Davidson started the Library Aide training course and Phyllis Thompson Harris and I were in the class.

My last year at Ames High ('44-'45) I worked part-time at the library and my particular task was to take stacks of saved newspapers and clip out all the notices regarding service people and paste them in scrapbooks and record them on file cards. If there were extended stories, I would call the family involved for an update and make a note of that.

I later wondered what happened to those scrap-books and now I know! I'll be anxious to see them on the website as I know my memory will be jogged by some of the classmates who enlisted and didn't return. Please find enclosed a small check for part of the match required by the grant."

...continued next page

Anita's letter referred to 26 scrapbooks that recorded the military service of Story County individuals during World War II. The Society recently received a State of Iowa grant to digitize these fragile documents to preserve them and facilitate placing them on our website.

We are so grateful to Anita and to Erb Hunziker for providing the cash match required by the grant.



Work is underway on the project by Breann Hunter (seated) and Mike Schuster.

We'll be pleased to report progress on this important resource in future newsletters.

Anita added this last note in her letter: "I'll also need to check out the book on ISU's Farm House since I lived in it for my Iowa State Home Management class in 47-48."

Check Your Label!

Is your membership renewal due? To check on your status, please read the fine print on your mailing label. If your dues are due, please use the form below to mail in your 2010 membership. Memberships fund the day-to-day operations of the Society, allowing us to continue to be a valued community resource. We thank you!

Renew Your 2010 Membership Now

Renewals are due on the one-year anniversary of last year's payment. See this newsletter's label for information about your membership.

Introductory - 1st year	\$10	Sustaining	\$100
Individual	\$25	Sustaining Plus	\$101-500
Family	\$40	Benefactor	\$500
Friend	\$50	Patron	\$1,000

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